

## CHAPTER XV

### THE NIGHT ADVANCE FROM ANZAC

(Sketches 11, 12, 16)

**Sketch 11** THE scene now changes to the northern flank at Anzac. Here, as soon as Turkish attention had been directed to Lone Pine, the first phase of Sir Ian Hamilton's main operations was to be set in motion, and an attempt made to occupy, before dawn, the whole crest of the Sari Bair ridge from Kojia Chemen Tepe (Hill 971) to Battleship Hill. With this ridge in the hands of the attacking force the Turkish defences at Anzac would at once become untenable, and the invaders would be in possession of an almost uninterrupted view of the Dardanelles from Ak Bashi Liman to the Narrows.

No account of the operations now to be described can hope to convey any adequate idea of the extreme difficulties of the undertaking if the reader does not first try to visualize the bewildering nature of the country through which the troops were to move. The spurs and gullies are so contorted, so rugged and steep, and so thickly covered with dense prickly scrub, that their passage is difficult enough, even in peace time, for an unencumbered tourist provided with a good map and setting out in the full light of day. In August 1915 the only available maps were very inadequate, and these arduous routes had to be traversed at night by heavily laden men, who were harassed by an invisible enemy and led by guides who themselves had little real knowledge of the ground.

**Sketch 16.** The western side of the Sari Bair ridge is buttressed by a succession of wild and tortuous spurs. Of these, it will suffice for the moment to notice, from south to north, Rhododendron Spur, Damakjelik Spur and Abdul Rahman Spur.

Five important ravines—all of them dry except after heavy rain—must also be noticed: Sazli Beit Dere, Chailak Dere, Aghyl Dere, Kaiajik Dere and Azma Dere, the last a tributary of the main Azmak Dere which runs westward from Biyuk Anafarta to the Ægean.

Rhododendron Spur falls gently from the summit of Chunuk

Bair. From its western end spring three important off-shoots. Aug. Of these, the northern one, Cheshire Ridge, leads to Bauchop's Hill and Walden Point. The central off-shoot, stretching westward, culminates in a flat-topped hill, very precipitous on three sides, known as Table Top; and immediately west of Table Top it deteriorates into a razor-edged and precipitous-sided col. This col leads to another scrub-covered hill on which were situated Old No. 3 Post, held by the Turks, and, on its western slopes, Nos. 2 and 3 Posts held by New Zealand troops. The southern off-shoot of Rhododendron Spur, also running west, is crowned by a steep and rugged hillock, over 250 feet high, known as Destroyer Hill. This latter feature, Table Top, and Bauchop's Hill, were all known to be held by Turkish outposts.

Immediately south of Destroyer Hill the main bed of Sazli Beit Dere leads steeply upwards to Chunuk Bair. A tributary of this gully leads to the northern side of Destroyer Hill, and then forks into two. The right fork gives comparatively easy access to the southern side of Table Top and the western shoulder of Rhododendron Spur. The left fork is a blind alley which leads only to the steep western side of Table Top and its razor-edged col.

Chailak Dere runs between No. 3 Post and Bauchop's Hill. This gorge is deep and narrow, and its steep sides are covered with scrub. But its rough stream-bed is comparatively straight, with no confusing tributaries, and leads upwards to the point of junction between Rhododendron Spur and Cheshire Ridge.

Aghyl Dere, north of Bauchop's Hill, is a wide and shallow valley at its western (seaward) end; but earlier in its course it is joined by many tributary gullies and its sides are steep and rugged. The main ravine leads to the foot of a level shelf, about 300 feet down from the crest of Chunuk Bair. On this small tract of level ground in 1915 was a walled enclosure and a tiny hut, commonly known as the "Farm."

Damakjelic Spur is a name invented here to describe a cluster of steep and roughly parallel spurs which fall abruptly from the main ridge near the twin-topped Hill Q. On its south-western face this spur is flanked by Aghyl Dere, and its many tributaries. Its north-western end is split into two main spurs by a short gully known as Kaijik Dere. Of these two spurs, the southern is crowned by a gently sloping hill known as Damakjelic Bair, the northern by a similar eminence known as "Hill 60."

Azma Dere lies north-east and east of Hill 60, and on its eastern bank is the forbidding Abdul Rahman Spur. This last spur leads straight to the summit of Koja Chemen Tepe. Un-

Aug. known to the British, Liman von Sanders had recently completed a rough military road from Büyük Anafarta *via* the eastern side of this spur to Hill 971 (Koja Chemen Tepe), and thence, just behind the crest of the main ridge, to Hill Q, Chunuk Bair, and Battleship Hill.

Available information about the numbers and dispositions of the Turks on the 6th August was remarkably accurate. The total strength of the enemy opposed to the Anzac corps was placed at 19,000 rifles.<sup>1</sup> Actually it amounted to just a thousand more. These troops were known to belong to the *19th, 5th and 16th Divisions*, and the greater part of them were thought to be disposed between Battleship Hill on the north and Pine Ridge on the south. On the northern flank, where the turning movement was to be carried out, there were reported to be two Turkish battalions facing the two New Zealand outposts, and two battalions in reserve near the Farm.<sup>2</sup> North of Battleship Hill the main ridge was believed to be unoccupied.

Turkish activity in the northern foothills had increased since the beginning of August, but not very much had been done in the way of entrenching. Aerial photographs showed small works at Old No. 3 Post, on Trble Top, and on Bauchop's Hill, and two small trenches on the western shoulder of Rhododendron Spur. Battleship Hill was heavily entrenched, but further north, along the crest of the main ridge, the only defences visible were a single line of shallow and disconnected trenches which ended a little south of Chunuk Bair.

Major-General Godley, whose New Zealand and Australian Division had so long occupied the northern half of the Anzac line, was to be responsible for the capture of the Sari Bair heights and also for three subsidiary attacks from his existing line to assist the main operation. His force had been largely increased, and now amounted to 20,000 rifles, including ten of the seventeen New Army battalions which had recently landed at Anzac. Its composition was:

The New Zealand and Australian Division.	
3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade.	
39th Infantry Brigade.	
40th	} 13th Division.
6/South Lancashire Regt. (38th Bde.).	
8/Welch Regt. (Pioneers).	
29th Indian Infantry Brigade.	
Indian Mountain Artillery Brigade.	

<sup>1</sup> General Birdwood's force at Anzac, including the troops specially attached for the operations, amounted to 37,000 rifles.

<sup>2</sup> Actually there were only two battalions in all in the northern foothills.

**Sketch 16.**

Arnak Dore



**First Objective** .....  
**Second Objective** .....  
**Third Objective** .....  
**Proposed routes** .....  
**Left Assaulting Column** .....  
**Right Assaulting Column** .....  
**A - Apex. P - Pinnacle** .....

Well.

SCALE OF MILES.

Heights in feet.

**Online Survey 1990.**

The seven remaining New Army battalions at Anzac (three of Aug. the 38th Brigade and all four of the 29th Brigade, 10th Division) were retained in corps reserve.

General Godley's plan<sup>1</sup> was to attack the Sari Bair ridge with two columns. The Right Assaulting Column was to advance up Rhododendron Spur to Chunuk Bair. The Left Assaulting Column had a dual objective. After reaching the last left-hand fork in Aghyl Dere, half the column was to strike eastward across Damakjelik Spur and Azma Dere to Abdul Rahman Spur, and thence to advance on Hill 971. The other half, bearing right-handed, was to move up Damakjelik Spur and capture Hill Q.

To prevent the assaulting columns being held up at the outset, the nearer foothills were first to be cleared and piqueted by independent detachments known respectively as the Right and Left Covering Forces. Of these, the Right Covering Force was to capture the enemy posts on Destroyer Hill, Table Top, Old No. 3 Post, and Bauchop's Hill, which guarded the lower reaches of Chailak Dere and Sazli Beit Dere. The Left Covering Force was to move along the beach to Walden Point, cross Aghyl Dere, and occupy Damakjelik Bair. Here it would cover the left flank of the Left Assaulting Column as it entered the Aghyl valley. It would also be able to stretch out a hand to the right flank of the IX Corps, which was to land that night to the south of Nibrunesi Point.

Both covering forces were to move forward soon after dark, and it was hoped that all their objectives would be captured by half past ten. The two assaulting columns would begin their advance about 10.45 P.M. and were expected to reach the summit of the main ridge at least an hour before dawn. After capturing Hill Q and Hill 971, which was recognized as a more arduous task than the advance on Chunuk Bair—but was probably never recognized until after the war as being half as difficult as it really was—the Left Assaulting Column was merely to consolidate its position. The Right Assaulting Column, after securing Chunuk Bair, was to send a strong detachment south-west along the ridge to capture Battleship Hill. This latter operation would be assisted by a dawn attack on the Nek and Baby 700, to be launched from Russell's Top, inside the old Anzac position, by detachments of Australian Light Horse.

It was fully realized that the attack on Baby 700 would be very difficult. So, to distract the attention of other Turks in the neighbourhood, portions of the garrisons of Pope's Hill and Quinn's—also found by Australian Light Horse—were to make

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 7.

Aug. subsidiary attacks at dawn on the Chessboard and the Turkish trenches opposite Quinn's.

Finally, as soon as Battleship Hill had been captured, the troops who captured it were to pass on southwards to Scrubby Knoll on Gun Ridge. A line would then be occupied from that point westwards to Quinn's.

To ensure the orderly and punctual arrival of the covering and assaulting columns at their various places of deployment very detailed and careful orders had been issued. The long bottle-necked approach to the northern flank had room for only two streams of traffic, one moving by a rough track along the coast, the other by a communication trench broad enough for laden mules or men in file to pass along it without impeding the flow of "down" traffic.

No animals other than gun mules would accompany the assaulting columns; so all technical equipment would be carried by hand, and the attacking troops would have to be heavily loaded. Each man was to carry 200 rounds of ammunition and one day's rations.<sup>1</sup> Heavy entrenching tools were to be carried in the proportion of one pick and one shovel for every eight men. Rifles were not to be loaded, and the bayonet only was to be used till after daybreak.

Guides were warned that the advance must, of necessity, be slow: the rear of a column would certainly be unable to move at a quicker rate than one mile an hour.

Owing to the fear of rousing Turkish suspicions it had been impossible to make a detailed reconnaissance of all the routes to be traversed. For some weeks, however, Major P. J. Overton and other officers of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade had been making a series of daring reconnaissances of the lower foothills, and these officers were to lead the various columns. They were to be assisted by a few Greek civilians who claimed to know the district. In addition, all senior officers, and a few junior officers and sergeants, had been given the opportunity—such as it was—of studying as much of the country as was visible from points of vantage within the Anzac position and from the deck of a destroyer lying off the northern flank.

General Godley's battle headquarters was at No. 2 Post. Here too would be Major-General F. C. Shaw of the 13th Division. But as, for the opening phase, the 13th Division had been distributed amongst Godley's various columns and the

<sup>1</sup> The troops were urged to keep their water-bottles full as long as possible, and were warned that in some cases it might be impossible to send water up to them for 18 hours or food for 48 hours.

corps reserve, General Shaw would in the first instance have no executive functions.

It will be seen from these details that the whole scheme of the operations was strewn with amazing difficulties. The main hope of success was that the very boldness of the scheme would ensure surprise and enable the attacking troops to gain the crest of the ridge before the Turks could muster sufficient strength to stop them.

#### THE RIGHT COVERING FORCE

Soon after dark on the 6th August the Right Covering Force, 6/7 Aug. about 2,000 strong, began to creep forward from its bivouacs behind the northern outposts. The force was under the command of Br.-General A. R. Russell, and was made up of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade,<sup>1</sup> the Otago Mounted Rifles, the Maori contingent,<sup>2</sup> and a field troop of New Zealand engineers. The Auckland and Wellington regiments, proceeding up Sazli Beit Dere, were to take Old No. 3 Post, Destroyer Hill, and Table Top. Otago and Canterbury, with the Maori contingent attached, were to cross Chajlak Dere, seize the enemy posts on Bauchop's Hill and drive their garrisons across Aghyl Dere. The early and silent capture of all these foothills was of vital importance to the success of the whole plan.

The enemy's post at Old No. 3 was known to be very strong and to be protected on its western face by a thick belt of wire. It was therefore to be attacked from the south, and its early capture was dependent upon the success of an ingenious ruse which had been prepared for some weeks by the nightly programme of the destroyer on the left flank.

In accordance with that programme, to which the Turks were now thoroughly accustomed, the destroyer switched her searchlight on to Old No. 3 Post and opened fire punctually at nine o'clock. Under cover of this fire, and in the deep shade outside the beam of the searchlight, the Auckland regiment climbed the southern slope of the hill, and at half past nine, when the bombardment ceased and the light was switched to Table Top, the troops scrambled forward and charged the enemy's parapet. The ruse was successful. The Turks, sheltering from the accustomed bombardment, were taken by surprise, and the post was occupied with very little loss.

The Wellington regiment was equally successful. One squadron, detached towards Destroyer Hill, captured that post

<sup>1</sup> Wellington, Auckland and Canterbury Mounted Rifles.

<sup>2</sup> Two companies of infantry.



6/7 Aug. after a sharp struggle. The remainder of the regiment captured the post on Table Top and put the garrison to flight. But the precipitous slopes of Table Top had been a stiffer climb than expected and it was past midnight before the summit was reached. Finding a well-worn track on the northern slopes of the hill, a troop of the Wellingtons very sensibly piqueted it. As a result many small bodies of Turks, retreating from Chailak Dere, were taken prisoner.

Meantime Otago and Canterbury, after proceeding north along the beach, had turned right-handed up Chailak Dere and were attacking Bauchop's Hill. Here, too, there was unavoidable delay, for the enemy's posts on this spur proved more numerous and stronger than anticipated, and everywhere their garrisons offered stout resistance. But the New Zealanders, scattered though they were in small parties, fought with admirable dash and initiative. Just before 1 A.M. the summit of the hill was taken with a spirited bayonet charge, and the enemy was chased across Aghyl Dere.

The Otago regiment suffered considerable loss in this fighting. Its commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel A. Bauchop, was mortally wounded as he led the final charge, and out of some 400 men in action the casualties amounted to nearly 100. The other troops of the Right Covering Force—Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury, and the Maori contingent—had been more fortunate, and their losses were comparatively light. At least 200 Turks had been killed and a similar number captured.

It would be difficult to praise too highly the conduct of the New Zealand troops engaged in these encounters. Thanks to the dash and initiative displayed, which was never surpassed in the whole Gallipoli campaign, the majority of the Turkish outposts north of Anzac had now been accounted for, and the way was clear for the advance on Chunuk Bair.

In one respect alone had General Russell's force been unable to carry out its mission exactly in accordance with the plan. The task had taken  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours longer than anticipated. Nevertheless, there was still ample time for the Right Assaulting Column to reach the crest of Chunuk Bair at least an hour before dawn.

#### THE LEFT COVERING FORCE

The Left Covering Force, commanded by Br.-General J. H. du B. Travers of the 40th Brigade, consisted of the 4/South Wales Borderers (Lieut.-Colonel F. M. Gillespie), the 5/Wiltshire (Lieut.-Colonel J. Carden) and half the 72nd Field Company R.E.



Starting at 9.30 P.M. with the 4/South Wales Borderers in 6/7 Aug. front, the column pushed north along the coastal track as soon as the attack on Bauchop's Hill had begun to develop. Near Chailak Dere a little delay was caused by an intermixture of units with some of the 4th Australian Brigade (Left Assaulting Column) who had reached that point a little ahead of time. But thenceforward all went smoothly, and the column moved on without interruption to Aghyl Dere, where a Turkish post was rushed with the bayonet. Damakjelik Bair, which was reached by the South Wales Borderers soon after 11 P.M., was found to be occupied in some strength, but the Turks surrendered readily on the approach of the British troops, and by 12.30 A.M. the hill had been occupied and 200 prisoners captured.

Here, too, then, thanks very largely to the fine leadership of Colonel Gillespie, the operations had begun well. More than half the Turkish garrison had been killed or captured, and the way was open for the Left Assaulting Column to advance on its distant objective.

#### THE RIGHT ASSAULTING COLUMN

The Right Assaulting Column, under Br.-General F. E. Johnston, consisted of the New Zealand Infantry Brigade, the 26th (Jacob's) Indian Mountain Battery (less one section) and No. 1 Field Company New Zealand Engineers.

General Johnston, whose orders were to reach Chunuk Bair an hour before dawn, had for his preliminary objective two small trenches on the western shoulder of Rhododendron Spur. The Canterbury Battalion (Lieut.-Colonel J. G. Hughes) was to advance up the fork of Sazli Beit Dere which led round the northern side of Destroyer Hill and the southern side of Table Top. The rest of his force (Otago, Wellington and Auckland battalions, the mountain battery and the engineers) were to move *via* Chailak Dere, and, after passing the northern side of Table Top, to climb right-handed to a saddle between Table Top and the western shoulder of Rhododendron Spur. Here they would be joined by the Canterbury Battalion, and the whole force would then advance on the preliminary objective together. It was hoped that this objective would be reached between 1 and 2 A.M.; and from there to Chunuk Bair, which was thought to be unoccupied, was a comparatively easy journey of only 1,000 yards along the crest of Rhododendron Spur.

The two portions of the column were to start moving up their respective ravines at 10.45 P.M. But at that time there

6/7 Aug. were still sounds of fighting on Bauchop's Hill, so Johnston decided to wait. At half past eleven, however, as the firing still continued, and as further loss of time would plainly be dangerous, the order was given for both columns to advance.

The northern column, with the Otago Battalion (Lieut.-Colonel A. Moore) in front, made slow but steady progress up Chailak Dere.<sup>1</sup> No opposition was encountered, but on reaching the northern face of Table Top about 1 A.M., "there were distinct indications that Turks were on top of it". It seemed imperative to clear up this situation before pushing on farther. The column was halted, and two companies of the Otago Battalion were ordered to take the hill.

After some delay, the waiting troops below were astonished by a distant sound of hand-clapping. Subsequently it was learnt that a large party of Turks, in bivouac on a ledge of Table Top, had not been discovered by the Mounted Rifles who captured that hill a little earlier. These men, anxious to surrender, threw down their arms when the Otago infantry advanced, and cheered and clapped their hands to show their friendly intentions.

A lot of time had slipped away before the Otago companies rejoined the column, and it was after half past two, and long behind the programme, when the northern portion of General Johnston's force again resumed its advance. But the moon had now risen; progress was quicker; and all opposition had apparently died away. "It was a curious sensation", writes Temperley, "to be marching along that valley in bright moonlight, far within the Turkish lines, without opposition of any kind. One Turk, who rushed out at the head of the advanced guard, I shot dead with my pistol. He was the only Turk seen that night."

Soon after passing the eastern end of Table Top, the column toiled upwards to the saddle between that hill and Rhododendron Spur. There, about 300 yards from its first objective, and 1,300 yards from the top of Chunuk Bair, it was to have met the Canterbury Battalion. But there was no sign of that unit, and a halt was now called to await its arrival.

The Canterbury Battalion meanwhile had lost its way disastrously. The leading troops took the blind fork of the Sazli Beit Dere, and reached the foot of Table Top at its most precipitous point. Realizing his error, the battalion commander ordered a retirement to the other fork of the ravine; but his

<sup>1</sup> This account is based on a report furnished by Brigadier A. C. Temperley, at that time brigade-major of the New Zealand Infantry Brigade, who was walking with the advanced guard.

Order was misinterpreted, and just before dawn the greater part 6/7 Aug. of the battalion arrived back at its starting-point. The troops were soon retracing their steps to carry out their mission. But vital hours had been lost. Daylight at half past four found General Johnston still awaiting the arrival of his fourth battalion, and the chance of capturing Chuzuk Bair on very easy terms was slowly disappearing.

#### THE LEFT ASSAULTING COLUMN

The task of the Left Assaulting Column was very much more arduous than that allotted to General Johnston's force. The route to be traversed was far more intricate and confusing; it was more than twice as long, and only a small fraction of it had been previously reconnoitred. But once the low foothills were cleared little further opposition was expected, and, as an offset against the difficulties of the route, the column would be led by Major Overton himself.

The column consisted of the 4th Australian Brigade (Pr.-General J. Monash), the 29th Indian Brigade (Major-General H. V. Cox), the 21st (Kohat) Indian Mountain Battery (less one section), and No. 2 Field Company New Zealand Engineers. Its total strength was about 5,000 rifles. General Cox, who had arrived at Anzac only five days previously, was in command.

The whole column, headed by the 4th Australian Brigade, was to march north *via* No. 3 Post and Walden Point to the mouth of the Aghyl valley. After working up that valley for three quarters of a mile, with its left flank protected by the two New Army battalions on Damakjelic Bair, its two leading (Australian) battalions would be pushed out left-handed to form a line of piquets to the Abdul Rahman Spur. The rest of the column would then strike north-east up the last main tributary of Aghyl Dere. At the head of this gully the 1/5th and 2/10th Gurkhas would be despatched uphill towards Chamchik Punar to attack Hill Q, while the two remaining Australian battalions, with the 1/6th Gurkhas and 14th Sikhs, would continue north-eastward into Azma Dere and thence to Abdul Rahman Spur. Here they would form up at a point three quarters of a mile from the summit of the main ridge and prepare for the final advance on Hill 971.

It was calculated that the forming-up place on Abdul Rahman Spur would be reached about 2 A.M., and that this would give plenty of margin for the summit of the ridge to be gained by three o'clock.<sup>1</sup> But these calculations, though they

<sup>1</sup> The first streak of dawn would come about 4 A.M.

6/7 Aug. allowed  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours for the passage of three miles, were too optimistic. Apart from the chance of opposition, they made an insufficient allowance for the checks and delays inseparable from a night march through amazingly difficult country, culminating in a steep climb up a rugged hill which had never been reconnoitred.

Even as a peace-time manoeuvre, indeed, the task of reaching the top of Hill 971 by night in the allotted time would have tried the mettle of troops in perfect health, and left little margin for any mistakes in direction. And the 4th Australian Brigade in August 1915, in common with all the troops who had been on the peninsula since April, was very far from fit. To quote the words of one of the battalion commanders: "Our physical condition was very poor, and we had heavy loads to carry. We had . . . too many untrained reinforcements who, though keen and willing, had not the unit *esprit de corps*. . . . Most of our men were very weak, and I doubt if they could have marched the distance required in the time, given daylight, proper guides, and no opposition. It was the worst 48 hours I can recollect in Gallipoli."

Trouble began from the first. As already pointed out, there had been some little confusion in the crossing of Chailak Dere by the Left Covering Force, and it was after eleven o'clock, or half an hour behind time, when the 4th Australian Brigade, led by the 13th Battalion,<sup>1</sup> began to move forward from No. 3 Post. The advance was checked almost at once, and progress soon became so slow that it was not until four hours later that the rear of the column filed past the starting-point. The success of the operation had thus been gravely imperilled almost before it began.

The main reason for this disastrous delay was that a native guide, accompanying Major Overton, persuaded that officer to take a short cut to Aghyl Dere by a narrow gorge<sup>2</sup> a few hundred yards to the south of Walden Point. This gorge, he said, would save at least half an hour, and was the normal route into the Aghyl valley in time of peace. But shortly after the leading troops entered the gorge they were sniped at from both flanks. The column was halted, and one company was sent to each flank to clear the hills. Probably the only Turks present were a few scouts; but much time was lost while waiting for the flanking companies to return, and a little farther on the gorge was so

<sup>1</sup> The 14th Battalion followed the 13th, then came brigade headquarters, and then the 15th and 16th. Brigade headquarters was marching in the centre of the brigade in accordance with a direct order from Major-General Cox. The Indian brigade was in rear of the 4th Australian Brigade.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently known as "Taylor's Gap."

overgrown with prickly scrub that pioneers had to be sent 6/7 Aug. ahead to hack a path for the troops. Eventually the head of the column reached Aghyl Dere, but the passage of this small gorge, only 600 yards long, had taken three hours. It was now two o'clock, and the whole column was already due at its rendezvous.

The protracted delay in the gorge was very upsetting to the nerves of the long column of Australian and Indian troops which stretched back to No. 2 Post. Halted hour after hour, with sounds of firing in front, and the night as black as pitch, the men were a prey to every idle rumour that flickered down the line. Once a party of men came stumbling back in panic, and an order was passed to retire. Refusing to believe this order, an officer of the Gurkhas strode up the column to find out what was happening, and traced the source of the trouble to a frightened hospital assistant. Such experiences are common to all night operations. But it is easy to imagine how bad a beginning they were for the strenuous work that lay in front of the troops, many of whom had never been in action.

During the halt in the gap, Br.-General Monash had sent an officer forward to ascertain its cause; but, after a long wait, as he did not return, the Brigadier sought for General Cox and asked and received permission to go forward himself to the head of his column.<sup>1</sup> On reaching the point where Taylor's Gap debouches upon Aghyl Dere he found that the column had again halted "because one (or two) platoons of the 13th had been sent forward to clear the front and had "not yet reported back". Thereupon General Monash personally led the two leading platoons across Aghyl Dere, where they found themselves on a stubble field at the mouth of a wide tributary valley. The moon was just rising, and the troops came under fire.

Further trouble now arose. Having come to Aghyl Dere by an unexpected route, it was difficult for the officers to fix their exact position. Eventually, about 2.30 A.M., General Monash sent the 13th and 14th Battalions to attack along the tributary ravine in front of them, to protect the further advance. Then, hurrying back to Taylor's Gap, he found the 15th Battalion at its mouth, "uncertain what to do". Lieut.-Colonel J. H. Cannan, commanding this battalion, was ordered to proceed along the main ravine in accordance with the original plan; and after sending a message to the 16th Battalion in rear to follow the 15th as quickly as possible, the brigadier established a temporary headquarters in Aghyl Dere about 500 yards to the east of

<sup>1</sup> This account is taken from a note on his experiences in the Gap furnished by Sir John Monash.

6/7 Aug. Taylor's Gap. From this point he was in touch with all his battalions by telephone soon after daybreak. "It was there", writes General Monash, "that General Cox joined me about sunrise, the rest of his column and his headquarters having vanished into the blue. He was alone, with one armed Gurkha as escort. He had been slightly wounded and was bleeding."

The 15th Battalion had not proceeded very far when a scattered fire, which caused the leading companies to deploy, rang out from the front and both flanks. But the troops pushed on, and about three o'clock were directed half-left, up a spur<sup>1</sup> which, according to the local guide, would lead to Azma Dere and thence to their rendezvous on Abdul Rahman Spur. The country here was densely covered with undergrowth in which a number of Turks had taken cover. The Turks, however—probably the remnants of the garrison of Bauchop's Hill—made no prolonged stand, and as dawn came up they gradually melted away. But the Australians were by this time desperately weary, and their progress was terribly slow. "The resistance", writes one of the commanding officers, "even though small, coming to us after a long and nerve-racking night, tired out and generally done in, made it difficult to get the troops on—their natural inclination was to go to ground, and it was hard to get them up and on the move again." At daybreak the leading unit had penetrated no farther than a small knoll on Damakjelic Spur, overlooking Kaijak Dere.<sup>2</sup>

From the top of this knoll there could be seen the whole length of Abdul Rahman Bair from the Anafarta plain to Hill 971, while, a little to the left, the 13th and 14th Battalions were digging themselves in on a line roughly in prolongation of that held by the Left Covering Force.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from occasional sniping, all opposition had ceased. But the Australian brigade had reached the end of its tether. The men were played out, and were throwing themselves down to sleep at every halt. The colonels of the 15th and 16th Battalions decided to dig in where they were; and on referring to brigade headquarters this decision was confirmed by Generals Monash and Cox.

Meanwhile, in rear, a little after daybreak, the battalions

<sup>1</sup> The spur was on the south-eastern side of Australia Valley.

<sup>2</sup> For several hours the Australian battalion commanders believed that they were on an underfeature of Abdul Rahman Spur. In point of fact, they were still half a mile from that spur, and separated from it by Kaijak Dere as well as Azma Dere.

<sup>3</sup> According to battalion diaries, the losses of the 13th Battalion during the night amounted to 70 all ranks; those of the 14th to 34.

of the Indian brigade (marching in the following order: 1/5th 6/7 Aug. Gurkhas, 2/10th Gurkhas, 1/6th Gurkhas, one company N.Z. engineers, 21st Mountain Battery, 14th Sikhs) were in turn directed by Major Overton towards their various objectives.<sup>1</sup> The Indian troops, however, had only reached Anzac the day before, and neither officers nor men had ever seen the ground.

Loss of direction, in these difficult conditions, was probably unavoidable. Long after daylight three companies of the 1/5th Gurkhas seem to have reached the lower slopes of the Chamchik Punar Spur. But they were not supported; they had already lost three of their British officers from Turkish snipers, and their advance came to an end. The fourth company of this battalion, and two companies of the 2/10th Gurkhas, took a wrong turning, and the majority of these troops eventually found themselves in touch with the New Zealand Brigade on Rhododendron Spur. The other two battalions of the brigade (1/6th Gurkhas and 14th Sikhs) were widely separated. By 9 A.M. the 1/6th Gurkhas had reached a position on a spur to the south of Chamchik Punar, whence Hill Q towered a thousand yards to the east.<sup>2</sup> The 14th Sikhs, a long way in rear, had come up on the right flank of the 4th Australian Brigade.

In both detachments of General Cox's force, therefore, the attempt to reach the main ridge before dawn had failed by a wide margin, and the chances of eventual success had already begun to dwindle.

#### THE DAWN ATTACK ON THE NEK

In the confident hope that Chunuk Bair would be occupied 7 Aug. by the Right Assaulting Column well before dawn, it was General Birdwood's plan to complete the capture of the summit of the main ridge at 4.30 A.M. by two converging attacks—one to be made southwards from Chunuk Bair on Battleship Hill, and the other north-eastwards from Russell's Top on the Nek and Baby 700.

Baby 700, overlooking the head of Monash Gully, was the strongest part of the enemy's line at Anzac. Its steep slopes were scarred with several lines of trenches. The only direct

<sup>1</sup> The gallant Overton, who had striven so hard for the success of this outflanking movement, and risked his life so often on daring reconnaissance, was killed by a sniper later in the morning.

<sup>2</sup> From this position Hill Q, still untenanted, could have been reached in an hour's climb; but no other troops could be seen near there, and an order arrived to dig in where they were and renew the attack next day.



7 Aug. approach to it from Anzac lay along the Nek, a narrow causeway, dwindling at the Baby 700 end to twenty-five yards wide, with steep slopes on either side of it. The Nek itself was held by the Turks with two lines of trenches across its Anzac end, and No Man's Land in front was further protected by enfilade fire from at least five machine guns on inaccessible spurs on either flank. So strong, indeed, were the defences of this part of the Turkish line that General Birdwood had long realized that an unaided attack on the Nek from Russell's Top would be almost hopeless.

It had therefore been arranged that the assault on the Nek should be supported, not only by a converging advance from the north, but by a simultaneous attack from Pope's Hill due east against the Chessboard trenches and by an assault on a portion of the Turkish line immediately opposite Quinn's.

In his final instructions to Major-General Godley, the corps commander had laid down that the assault on the Nek and Baby 700, as also the operations from Pope's and Quinn's, was to be launched at 4.30 A.M. on the 7th, "unless orders are given to the contrary".

As the hour fixed for these attacks drew near it was already known at corps headquarters that General Cox's column was still in Aghyl Dere and that only a portion of the Right Assaulting Column had reached the western shoulder of Rhododendron Spur. But it was also known that neither column had encountered much opposition, and General Birdwood was persuaded that the New Zealand Brigade might at any moment be pushing forward to the summit of Chunuk Bair.

It was no longer possible to hope that the New Zealanders would be in time for the further task of pressing on at 4.30 A.M. towards Battleship Hill. But it was plain that the vital task of capturing and consolidating Chunuk Bair would be immensely simplified if all the enemy troops at the head of Monash Gully were chained to their trenches by the pre-arranged assaults from within the Anzac position. Obviously, in the absence of any converging movement from the north, the attack on the Nek would be a desperate undertaking. Nevertheless the corps commander decided that, for the sake of the main operation, the inevitable losses must be incurred and all three attacks launched exactly in accordance with plan.

The storming of the Nek and Baby 700, which was to be prefaced by half an hour's "intensive" bombardment, had been entrusted to the 3rd Light Horse Brigade (Br.-General F. G. Hughes), and was to be undertaken by 600 men from the 8th and 10th Light Horse Regiments. Owing to the narrow

frontage of the Turkish trenches on the Anzac side of the Nek, 7 Aug. the attack was to be delivered in four waves of 150 men each, two from each regiment. The first wave was to seize the Nek, the second the front trenches and saps on Baby 700, and the third the crest of the hill. The fourth wave, carrying picks and shovels, would act as a reserve. Finally the 8/Cheshire Regiment (13th Division) was to follow on behind, to assist in consolidating the position. All the attacking units were provided with small red and yellow flags to show the positions gained.

None of the troops concerned had any previous experience of assaulting a hostile line, and all were in high spirits and confident of success. Everyone was so eager to share in the coming victory that in the case of the 8th Light Horse the first wave was to be led by its regimental commander (Lieut.-Colonel A. H. White) and the second wave by his second-in-command. But there can have been very little hope of surprise. Throughout the night, in order to assist the main columns, the opposing Turkish garrisons had been kept on the alert by frequent bursts of firing.

Through some mistake, probably a faulty synchronization of watches, the artillery bombardment of the Nek ended prematurely, and for the last few minutes before zero hour there was scarcely a shot fired. Turkish reports state that their troops used this respite to man their firesteps in readiness to meet the assault. At this point the breadth of No Man's Land was only sixty yards.

At half past four the first wave vaulted over the parapet, and was met by a storm of lead. Colonel White and all nine officers who accompanied him were instantly killed, and within a few seconds practically every man in the wave had been either killed or wounded. Two minutes later, undaunted by this disaster, the second wave leapt forward and shared a similar fate. But one or two men of this wave reached the enemy's trench alive, and a single red and yellow flag fluttered for a few seconds on the parapet.

The commander of the third wave (Major T. J. Todd of the 10th Light Horse), who, just as his men filed into the front-line trench, was told that the first two waves had been annihilated, reported to his commanding officer (Lieut.-Colonel N. M. Brazier) that a further effort would be madness. Brazier, seeing these men lying dead beyond the parapet, agreed with Todd, and rushed back to brigade headquarters in an adjoining trench to ask for the attack to be abandoned. But there he was told that a red and yellow flag had been seen on the enemy's parapet:

7 Aug. it was essential to support the men who had already got across, and the attack must proceed.

Thereupon the third wave surged forward, and a few seconds later the men of this wave were most of them shot down. An effort was made by Colonel Brazier to prevent the destruction of the last remaining wave. In the confusion of the moment, however, while Brazier was still absent, some garbled order arrived, and the left of the line clambered out of the trench. Crouching as they went, instead of charging upright, they managed to advance a dozen yards. But the enemy's fire was still as devastating as ever, and a few minutes later the wounded survivors of the 10th Light Horse were crawling back to their line.

Meanwhile, in accordance with the initial plan, two companies of the 8/Royal Welch Fusiliers had tried to make a diversion in the left branch of Monash Gully, to help the frontal attack on the enemy's line. These troops were brought to a halt by somewhat heavy loss,<sup>1</sup> and by 6 A.M. the attempt to capture the Nek had been heavily defeated. According to a Turkish eyewitness, the Turkish losses in the whole affair were nil.

The attacks from Pope's and Quinn's were equally unsuccessful. Led by Major T. W. Glasgow, the 1st Light Horse, advancing on Dead Man's Ridge and the Chessboard from Pope's Hill, succeeded in seizing three lines of enemy trenches; but they could not be supported, and were forced to retire with the loss of 154 officers and men out of the 200 engaged. The 2nd Light Horse, ordered to break out from Quinn's in four waves of 50 men each, narrowly escaped a very similar fate. Seeing every man in the first wave hit as soon as he cleared the parapet, the senior officer on the spot wisely decided that the other three waves should not be allowed to start.

The total losses in these brave attacks from within the Anzac position amounted to nearly 650 officers and men out of 1,250 who went into action. Their sacrifice, moreover, had been in vain. General Birdwood's sole object in allowing the attacks to proceed was to help the advance of the New Zealanders on Chunuk Bair. But that advance was not yet begun. As late as 6 A.M., with no Turks in front of them, and with Chunuk Bair still unoccupied,<sup>2</sup> three battalions of the New Zealand Brigade were still halted on the western shoulder of Rhododendron Spur.

<sup>1</sup> The Fusiliers lost 4 officers and 61 men killed and wounded.

<sup>2</sup> From Turkish information, it would appear that the only Turks on the main ridge at this time were two mountain guns between Battleship Hill and Chunuk Bair, with an escort of twenty rifles.

## RETROSPECT

By 6 A.M. on the 7th, therefore, neither of General Godley's 6/7 Aug. assaulting columns had reached its objectives, and the dawn attacks from within the Anzac position had ended in failure. Despite the care of General Birdwood's preliminary concentration; despite the valuable and all-important surprise which had thereby been effected; and despite the successful capture of the Turkish northern outposts in the opening moves of the battle, the long-prepared scheme for gaining the crest of the main ridge on very easy terms had definitely failed. The goal might still be reached. But the Turks were now forewarned; reinforcements were certainly hurrying to each of the threatened points; and it was plain to the officers of both assaulting columns that their best chance had gone.

The failure of the main assaulting columns had not been due to the opposition of the Turks. The enemy's sole defences on the northern flank had been so completely disorganized by the spirited action of the New Zealand mounted riflemen that the New Zealand Infantry Brigade had met with no opposition at all, while General Cox's troops had encountered nothing more serious than the delaying tactics of small parties of Turks who had already been driven from their positions and were in no condition to make a prolonged stand. On the right, the narrow failure to reach Chunuk Bair was due in great part, if not entirely, to the unfortunate chance by which the Canterbury Battalion had lost its way and the brigadier had refused to proceed without it. At 1 A.M. on the 7th he had arrived within 1,500 yards of his objective, which at that time was untenanted. At half past four he was still 1,200 yards away. In the intervening 3½ hours only one Turk had been seen.

On the left, as already pointed out, General Cox's force had been given a task—the seizure of Hill 971 before dawn—which even in time of peace, and with troops in perfect health, would have left small margin for error.<sup>1</sup> But the complete failure in this part of the field was principally due to the unfortunate last-minute decision to advance through Taylor's Gap instead of by the longer but perfectly easy path to the north of Walden Point. All the troops were in a weak state of

<sup>1</sup> General Sir John Monash, who read this chapter in draft form, wrote as follows on 22nd September 1931—only a few weeks before he died—to the compiler of this volume: "There is no doubt that you are right in your judgment that the tasks set to the Left Assaulting Column were far beyond the physical capacity of troops in the debilitated condition in which they were after three months' continuous hardships."

6/7 Aug. health; the long delays in that dark and narrow gorge, and the snail-like pace of the advance, had helped to tire them out before their real work began. Had the longer route been taken there can be little doubt that the 4th Australian Brigade would have brushed aside the trifling opposition encountered and have reached the position it eventually gained by daylight at least two hours earlier and in far better fettle.

From a broader point of view, the chief mistake of the British plan was the inclusion of Hill 971 in the first night's objective. The view from Chunuk Bair is almost, if not quite, as extensive as that from the highest point on the ridge, and if General Birdwood, in accordance with his original scheme; had concentrated his attention on the capture of Chunuk Bair, to be followed immediately afterwards by an advance on Battleship Hill and Scrubby Knoll, his plan must surely have succeeded. With this smaller objective the long and difficult route followed by the Australian and Indian brigades would have been avoided, and in Chailak Dere there was little chance of a column losing its way. From the summit of Chunuk Bair a strong defensive line to protect the northern flank could have been taken up on Rhododendron Spur, Cheshire Ridge and Bauchop's Hill; and with Chunuk Bair and Battleship Hill safely in British hands, the whole Turkish line at Anzac would at once have become untenable. In such circumstances, the subsequent occupation of Hill Q and Hill 971 by a force already in possession of Chunuk Bair would have offered far less difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

But though the British plan failed, and though from the fact of its failure it cannot escape criticism, a study of the Turkish records for the 6th and 7th August suffices to show that a very small turn of Fortune's wheel would have steered it through to success. This, however, is no uncommon phenomenon. In many a hard-fought battle, when the issue trembles in the balance, a tiny mischance will tip the scales from overwhelming victory to irretrievable defeat. A slight error of judgment by a subordinate, the mistake of a guide, or the failure of an order to reach its destination, may prove the deciding factor; and many a well-laid plan will be classed as an illegitimate gamble which, in the hands of a luckier general, would have led to resounding success and be acclaimed as a mark of his genius.

<sup>1</sup> Liman von Sanders writes: "The whole Ari Burnu front would have had to be drawn back had the enemy been able to retain possession of the summits of these massive heights." "*Fünf Jahre Türkei*", p. 110.

TURKISH MOVEMENTS ON THE 6TH/7TH AUGUST

It has already been shown that, as a result of the attack on Lone Pine, Essad Pasha had hurried the whole of his available reserves to 400 Plateau before the attack on the northern outposts began. He had also ordered two regiments of Colonel Kannengiesser's *9th Division* to march on Lone Pine from the coastal defences south of Gaba Tepe.

When, therefore, about 9 P.M., the news reached him that strong columns of British troops were moving north along the coast from Anzac, followed shortly afterwards by reports of the attack on his northern posts and the landing of a strong force at Suvla, Essad was unable to assist his weak detachments in these localities, or to man the main ridge to the north of Battleship Hill. On the Turkish side, in fact, everything was turning out as General Birdwood had planned.

Liman von Sanders, as soon as he heard of the British attacks Sketch at Helles and Lone Pine, seems to have realized that the hour<sup>12</sup> of crisis had come, and his first thought was for the safety of the Bulair isthmus. To Feizi Bey, in command at Bulair, he at once telegraphed, urging him to increased vigilance. He also gauged, however, that it might be Birdwood's intention, while engaging Essad's left, to turn his right flank and attack the main ridge. About 6 P.M. he despatched his Chief of Staff, Kiasim Bey, to confer with Essad Pasha, and at the same moment, without reference to Essad, he personally ordered Major Willmer, in command of the weak detachment at Suvla, to send his one reserve battalion to strengthen the garrison of the foothills north of Anzac.<sup>1</sup>

A few hours later, with the news of Birdwood's attacks on Essad's right flank, and of the new landing at Suvla, Liman von Sanders was confronted with the identical problem that faced him on the 25th April. Were these operations of a minor character, or did they constitute Hamilton's main attack; and would it now be safe to weaken the Bulair garrison? This vital question could not as yet be answered; but at 1.30 A.M. on the 7th, in view of the growing seriousness of the news, Feizi Bey was ordered to despatch three battalions from Bulair to Turshun

<sup>1</sup> This battalion, the *1/32nd Regiment*, was the sole reinforcement sent to that neighbourhood on the night of the 6th August. In bivouac near Turshun Keui when the order to march arrived, it appears to have reached the Turkish bivouacs in Azma Dere early on the morning of the 7th, and its leading troops may possibly have come into action against the 4th Australian Brigade on Damakjelik Spur.

6/7 Aug. Keui with all possible speed.<sup>1</sup> Wehib Pasha, commanding the southern zone, was similarly ordered, despite his vehement protests, to despatch his reserve division<sup>2</sup> to Essad Pasha's assistance.

None of these movements, however, was of any immediate help to Essad.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the night of the 6th/7th August the Sari Bair ridge from Battleship Hill northwards remained undefended, and it is clear that had General Godley's columns succeeded in occupying it at dawn, many hours must have elapsed before the Turks could have mustered sufficient troops to dream of counter-attacking.

The gallant but fruitless attacks carried out at dawn at the head of Monash Gully were of actual benefit to the Turks. The heavy casualties inflicted on the assaulting troops encouraged the Turkish soldiers, and relieved their divisional commander of all anxiety for the safety of that part of his line. About 5.30 A.M., hearing that a column of British troops was established on Rhododendron Spur, Mustafa Kemal, the future President, who had thwarted British hopes at the original landing, despatched his only divisional reserve<sup>3</sup> to piquet the main ridge. About the same time, Essad Pasha, assured at last that the attack on Lone Pine was not the principal blow, ordered Colonel Kannengiesser to take his two regiments northward to hold the main ridge from Chunuk Bair to Hill 971, and that officer, hurrying ahead of his troops to reconnoitre, appears to have reached Chunuk Bair about 7 A.M.

Soon after daylight, the crowd of shipping in Suvla Bay, the thousands of troops on the beach, and the news of the advance of strong forces in the foothills north of Anzac, persuaded Liman von Sanders that this was indeed the long-expected attack by the new British army, and that Ian Hamilton was aiming at the capture of the Sari Bair ridge and the envelopment of his northern flank. At 6 A.M. he telegraphed to Feizi Bey to hurry south with the bulk of the *7th* and *12th Divisions*. At the same time he ordered every available man on the Asiatic

<sup>1</sup> Feizi Bey's *XVI Corps* at Bulair consisted of the *6th Division* (6 battalions) and the *7th* and *12th Divisions* (each of 9 battalions), together with 3 gendarmerie battalions, and a few other details. Most of these troops had recently suffered heavily at Helles, and the average strength of battalions was about 500 men.

<sup>2</sup> The *4th Division* at Serafim Farm, on Kilid Bahr Plateau. Liman states that Wehib despatched this division northward of his own initiative, but other evidence shows that he reluctantly parted with it when ordered to do so.

<sup>3</sup> Two companies of the *2/12nd Regiment* (19th Division). In the next chapter it will be seen that these companies reached the top of the ridge about 7 A.M., but fell back at the sight of the British columns advancing, and were subsequently rallied by Colonel Kannengiesser.



side of the Straits to march with all speed to Chanak for conveyance to the European shore. Later in the morning, on hearing of the collapse of the second British attack at Helles, he ordered Wehib Pasha to send yet another division to Anzac; and soon afterwards the reply was received that two regiments of the *8th Division* were marching north immediately.

But it was plain to Liman von Sanders that for the next 24 hours at least the situation of his whole army would be intensely critical. Even the *4th Division* from Serafim Farm could not be expected for several hours. Neither the troops from Bulair nor the *3th Division* from Krithia could be brought into action till the following morning at the earliest, and the first units from the Asiatic shore could scarcely arrive till the night of the 8th/9th. Throughout the daylight hours of the 7th he would have scarcely one division to hold the main ridge, and only Major Willmer's three weak battalions to oppose the new army—whatever size it might be—that was landing at Suvla Bay.